

THE
CHARACTERS
AND
CONDUCT

OF
Sir John Edgar,

Call'd by Himself

ole MONARCH of the STAGE
in DRURY-LANE;

AND HIS
Three Deputy-Governors.

Two Letters to Sir JOHN EDGAR.

By Mr Dennis

L O N D O N :
Printed for M. SMITH, in Cornhill.
MDCCXX.

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T O

Sir John Edgar.

*Diruit, edifecat, mutat quadrata rotundis,
Quod petit spernit, repetit quod nuper omisit,
Æstuat, & vita Disconvenit ordine Toto.* Hor.

Sir JOHN,



HE World has a long Time wonder'd that you, who have so many Years endeavour'd to pass for a Person of the greatest Probity of the Age, should constantly chuse to go by an *Alias*, which is almost always an infallible Sign of a Knave. But notwithstanding your setting forth in Disguise, during this Season of *Masquerades*, I no sooner took up your Paper, but I found several as distinguishing Marks of your Mind, as your Black Peruke, and your Dusky Countenance are of your Right Worshipful Person. The Pedantry of your *Motto*, the Singularity of your Style, which has a Smack of *Tiperarian*, as *Livy's* had of *Patavinity*; your impertinent Praise of your Son, your diffuse Description of him, of his Person, his Parts, his Address,

dress (*id populus curat scilicet*) and above all, that Characteristical Stroke of Vanity, where you tell us, that you are very well entertain'd in an Assembly, where those who in other Conversations pass for fine Gentlemen, and fine Ladies, would be uninform'd Savages; all these denote you to be a certain Person, whom the King has graciously vouchsaf'd to Knight; and who has since with wonderful Goodness, Modesty, Wisdom, and Gratitude, bewail'd in Publick, that his Majesty has been so Gracious.

Well! my dear Knight, thou seest I have found thee out; and having found thee to be my old Acquaintance, I may make a little more free with thee, than if thou wert a meer Stranger. Yet however I may dislike thy Design, I cannot but commend the Greatness thy Spirit, who being a Knight in Reality, wilt no longer be a Squire not even in Masquerade; which has more than once oblig'd a Dutches to dwindle into a Dairy Maid; but art resolv'd, like a true Man of Honour, to be tenacious of it alone and in the Dark.

But 'tis Time to come to the Business. You say you are engaged, by the generous Concern of an old Lady, to undertake in this publick Manner, the Preservation and Improvement of the *English* Stage. If I presume now to give you a little wholesome Advice, will not you be Angry?

Lay aside this foolish Design. You have neither Capacity, nor Learning, nor Authority, for such an Undertaking. What! Do you pretend to set up for a Preserver and Improver of the publick Taste? You, who have done more to corrupt it, and to destroy it, than any Hundred Men in all *England*? You, of whose Errors in Judgment in your Lucubrations and Speculations, one might compile whole Volumes? You, who by your Criticisms, and by your Conduct, have brought the Stage to a Sort of a *Loosing Loadum*, where they

they who write worst, are sure to succeed best. Once more, I say, lay aside this foolish Design, or rather this foolish Pretence, for 'tis not your Design to improve any Thing, but your own Privy-Purse, Sir *John*; and you have been Twenty Years in improving that, and are just where you begun; so unlucky you are at improving, Sir *John*. The Truth of the Matter is this. You, and your Viceroy, C——r, and the rest of your Deputy Governors, have got the Ill-will of the Court, and Town, by exerting several noble Qualities, too well known both to Court and Town, to be mentioned here. Now your Interests being dependant on each other, and as it were the same, you have concerted and contrived between you, like to *Bessus*, and the Brothers of the Sword, to play the Game into each others Hands; so to retrieve your Interests, and your false Reputations, and to cast a Mist before the Eyes of those who never were clear-sighted. In order to this, you are to cry them up for accomplish'd Actors, and for inoffensive irreproachable Persons; and they are to extol you to the Skies, for a noble-minded, bright, and most generous Patron; and C——r is to place you among the Gods, as the *Romans* did their Emperors, by making you fly like an Eagle to them.

There is not one of those few Readers, who have vouchsaf'd to read the Papers call'd the *Theatre*, but see through the Design of them. While you and your Deputies, like Four Babies, put your Fingers before your Eyes, and being Blind your selves, fancy that no body else can See.

For do but consider with what intolerable Blunders you begin. You doubt not, you say, but you shall bring the World into your Opinion, that the Profession of an Actor, who in the other part of his Conduct is irreproachable, ought to receive the

same kind Treatment, which the World is ready to pay all other Artists. I will not quarrel with you about your *English* here. I shall let that alone till the end of the Letter. At present I shall only take Notice of Things. You must give me Leave at present only to tell you, that you are running a Way that is quite Counter to the Improvement of the Stage. For to improve the Stage, it would be necessary to admonish your Deputies to mend their Faults, and to augment their Talents; where, as you are for annihilating the first, and magnifying to such a Degree the last, as to imply that there is no Room for improving them. But the Truth of the Matter is, that tho' the Conduct of your Actors were Irreproachable, which no body will affirm but your self; and their Talents in their Kind incomparable, which neither they nor you believe, yet would they by no Means be equal to some other Artists.

Yet this Paradox you pretend to maintain by the Authority of *Cicero*. As if the greatest Authority in the World could signify any Thing against Reason and Experience, which are both against you, as we shall shew anon. I shall at present maintain, that the Authority of *Cicero* is as much against you, as either Reason, or Experience.

To shew you that I am resolved to agree with you, as much as I possibly can, I will not quarrel with the Sense of your pretended Quotation from *Cicero*. I will only quarrel with the Application of it. *Cicero*, you say, observes, in the first Book of his Offices, *That Persons are to be esteemed Genteel, or Servile, according as the Arts or Capacities in which they are employed, are Liberal, or Mechanical. He esteems those Liberal, in which the Faculties of the Mind are chiefly employed, and those Mechanical, in which the Body is the more laborious Part.* Now from hence you are pleas'd to infer, that the Employment of an Actor depending upon the Labour of the Mind,

Mind, more than upon that of the Body; a good Actor ought as much to be valued and esteem'd as any other Artist whatever. A very surprizing Inference! For to convince you that this Passage of Cicero can never be scrud nor tortur'd to the Advantage of Actors; that Orator, in his Oration for Archias the Poet, asserts in the Compass of four Lines, what is contradictory of each of the Branches of the foresaid Inference. For speaking of the Concern which the Romans had lately shewn for the Death of Roscius, he thus argues from it, to the Advantage of Archias: *Ergo ille Corporis motu, tantum amorem conciliarat à nobis omnibus: Nos animorum incredibiles motus, celeritatemque ingeniorum negligemus?*

Now here the Roman Orator plainly asserts two Things: First, That the Employment of an Actor depends more upon the Body than upon the Mind: And, Secondly, That the Esteem which we ought to have, ev'n for an excellent, inoffensive, irreproachable Actor, is infinitely less than what we ought to have for several other Artists. By the way, we shall take Occasion to convince you anon, that excellent, inoffensive, irreproachable Actors, are now-a-days black Swans.

But suppose we should allow, that the Employment of an Actor depends more on the Mind than it does on the Body; is it not monstrous to conclude from thence, that an Actor ought to be as much esteem'd as any other Artist whatever? The Employment of a Pedant certainly depends more upon the Mind than it does on the Body: But shall we infer from thence, that a Pedant ought to be as much esteem'd, as an accomplish'd Divine, or a consummate Statesman?

But you are pleas'd, Sir John, to proceed to still greater Wonders. For, say you, if there be no Objection against what the Orator says, that Men are to be consider'd only from their Abilities, (by the way, the

the Orator never said any thing like it;) *let their severest Enemies name the Profession, which requires Qualifications for the Practice of it, more elegant, more manly, more generous and more ornamental, than that of a just and pleasing Orator.* That is to say in plain *English*, That a just and pleasing Actor has Qualifications as elegant, as manly, as generous, and as ornamental, as any one of any Profession whatever. That is to say, that *Dogget* and *Ben Johnson*, being just and pleasing Actors, have Qualifications as elegant, as manly, as generous, as ornamental, as ever had formerly Archbishop *Tillotson*, or my Lord Chancellor *Bacon*.

Now, Sir *John*, can you forbear laughing, upon the reading this, at the Repetition of your own Extravagance? But besides that all this is monstrously and ridiculously false, and the reverse of common Sense; you knock your own pretended Design on the Head, which is the Improvement of the *British* Stage; and are the very worst Enemy that the Actors can possibly have. For by augmenting the Pride of these People by your vain Assertions, you are sure at the same time to augment their Insolence, their Impudence, their Ignorance and their Arrogance; which will render them absolutely unimproveable, and bring them further into Disgrace with the Court and Town, till they become at last insupportable. Therefore 'tis plain, from your taking this Method, that either you do not design the Improvement of the Stage, notwithstanding your Pretence; or that you do not understand it.

But I, who really and sincerely intend the Improvement of the Stage, will shew that I understand it better than you; and will be a better Friend to these People, by shewing them what They really are, and by that means rendering them humble, and consequently docile and improveable. For I pretend to shew both you and them, that

Actors

Actors are so far from having the great Qualities of extraordinary Men, that they have not the Understanding and Judgment of ordinary Gentlemen; because they have not had their Education.

I defy any one to name so much as one great Actor in my Time, who had had a generous Education; that is, who had from his Youth been train'd up to Arts and Sciences. Nor do I know of any one great Actor, since the Establishment of the Stage in *England*, who had extraordinary Parts.

Shakespear, indeed, had great Parts; but he was not a great Actor.

Otway and *Lee* had both Education and Parts; but they were wretched Actors; which soon oblig'd them to quit the Stage, and take up a nobler Employment.

There cannot be a more certain Sign of the Meanness of Actors Capacities, than their being the worst Judges in the World of the very Things about which they are eternally employ'd. And the present Actors, who are the Managers of the Play-House, have given all the World an irrefutable Proof, that they have still less Knowledge of Plays than had any of their Predecessors. For have not they turn'd Booksellers *mal' a propos*, and given a Hundred and twenty Pound for the Copy of a Play, for which none of their Predecessors would have given Five Pound? Perhaps they may say, that they depended upon the Interest of the Author, and a numerous Cabal. A very foolish Dependance! and which sets in a full Light their want of Understanding. For tho' the Interest of an Author, and a numerous Cabal, may go a great way towards a Theatrical Success; they will be so far from availing a Bookseller, that on the contrary, the Publishing of a damn'd Play, which has had Success upon the Stage, is very certain to put an End ev'n to that Success.

The very Employment of an Actor makes him less capable of understanding Plays, than those who have other Affairs, and other Diversions. For as a Sot and a Rake, who runs from Tavern to Brandyshop, from Brandyshop to Tavern, and is continually swilling, deadens his Palate, and depraves his Taste to that degree, that he is utterly incapable of distinguishing between brew'd and sophisticated Liquors, and the pure and generous Juice of the Grape: So Players, who are always swallowing their Parts, and getting by Rote with equal Application, and equal Earnestness, what a Person who has a noble Genius produces, and what a wretched Poetaster scribbles; become utterly incapable of distinguishing between the pure and golden Stream that flows from the immortal Fountain of *Hippocrene*, and that which springs from a muddy Source.

Their sordid Love and Greediness of Gain, contributes not a little to the corrupting their Understandings. For when a foolish Play happens to have a Run, as they call it, their sordid Temper inclines them to believe it good: It immediately becomes what they call a Stock Play; and is regarded as a Standard.

If you can gain so great a Point, as to make Players pass for Men of great Abilities, and for inoffensive, irreproachable Persons, you will stem a strong Current, which has prevail'd in the World for above Two Thousand Years. At *Rome*, during the Purity of the Commonwealth, they were accounted infamous; and the *Censors* of the Republick never fail'd to remove them from the Tribe in which they found them, to a lower. In *France* they are always excommunicated; and no Priest will, or dares to absolve them, till they are in the Article of Death. Here in *England*, they have always been look'd upon as Vagabonds and Rogues by Statute; unless they have been under the Protection

tection of our Kings, or of some of our *English* Peers. Yet in this last Case, I have been credibly inform'd, that, for great Misdemeanors, they have been sent to *Whitehall*, and whipt at the Porter's Lodge. And I have heard *Jo. Haines* more than once ingenuously own, that he had been whipt twice there.

If C---r, in the Days of King *James*, or King *Charles the First*, had dar'd to treat a Lord Chamberlain with half the Insolence that he has lately done the present, he would have been made an errant Bullbeggar: His Bones would have been as bloody, as his Head is raw.

I have now shewn you, what the Sense of the best and wisest Nations is, and has been, with relation to Actors. If I may be allow'd to speak my own, I am inclin'd to believe, that good Actors, as long as they are irreproachable in the rest of their Conduct, ought to be encourag'd and esteem'd; yet to be encourag'd and esteem'd as Actors, not as Gentlemen, nor as Persons who have a Thousand Times their Merit: But that ev'n the best Actors, with the most unblameable Conduct, are never to be trusted with Power. The trusting People with Power, who have neither Birth nor any Education, is sure to make them insolent, not only to Poets, by whose Labours they live, but to Persons of the very first Quality in *England*.

Besides what has happen'd lately, I remember the Time in a former Reign, when Three Peers of *England*, a Duke and Two Earls, both the one and the other, some of the most Illustrious of their respective Benches, wanted Power to get one poor Comedy acted; a certain insolent, impertinent Actor, who has lately reviv'd his Insolence with large Additions, had (thro' old *Rich's* Weakness, whom he led by the Nose) Power to withstand them all.

Well then, Sir *John*, I would have good Actors, as long as they are inoffensive, esteem'd and encourag'd as Actors; that is, as the Tools and Instruments, and Machines of the Muses, as the Apes of a Poet's Meaning, and the Eccho's and Parrots of his Voice. But if they once dare to grow insolent, if they behave themselves like Beggars on Horseback, and not only ride furiously as soon as they are up, but endeavour to ride over those very Persons who but the Moment before mounted them; they ought to be us'd like *Indians* who run a-muck in their own Country, or like Dogs who run mad in ours.

I come now to consider Actors in particular, as they are at present upon the *English* Stage; which you say you prefer to any other in *Europe*. I will not dispute that with you, because it signifies nothing to the Purpose. But has the *English* Stage made any improvement, since it has been under the Intendency of this separate Ministry? Has it not vilely degenerated? Are there either the great Actors that were upon it Thirty Years ago; or any such new entertaining Comedies as from Time to Time appear'd upon it? Is there any Promise of a future Poet? Is there any Promise of a future Actor? No; all is going to Ruin: The Stage is sinking under you; and there is no Hope of saving it, but by getting it out of the Hands of the Separate Ministry.

I know very well, that the present Managers of the Stage, empty by Nature, and vain by Success, value themselves abundantly upon their crowded Audiences. But how little Discernment, nay, how little common Sense is requir'd, to know, that their full Audiences are only the Effects of the Numbers of their Spectators, increas'd by several great Events which have happen'd of late Years; as, the Revolution, the Union, the King's
 Acces-

Accession to the Crown, and the Return of our Armies from the Continent? This is the only Reason why the Audiences are fuller than they were formerly, when they were far better entertain'd.

But while the Stage is thus sinking under you, by the Conduct of your Deputies, and your own, you are bragging that they will exalt it higher than those of the *Grecians*, and *Romans*; like a frank Godfather, you promise and vow strange Things in their Names, which like most other Godfathers, and other Godchildren, neither they nor you will ever keep, or perform. But is there any Thing in the Course of Nature, that can encourage you to make such a Promise; For you may take my Word for it, the World has done taking you for a Conjuror, and is come to believe that you deal with the Devil only, like other Sinners. Is there then any Thing in the Course of Nature, that can encourage you to make such a Promise? Is Ruin become the Road to Exaltation? Or must the Stage be buried like a Plant, in order to rise and Flourish?

But, Sir *John*; I am heartily sorry, for your Sake, that you made any Mention of the *Grecian* Stage. You had better have stuck to that of *Rome*. For if we may judge of the future by the past, you will be much more *Æmulous* of the *Roman*, Stage, than the *Grecian*. The *Grecian* Stage was supported by great Originals. The *Roman* Stage, for the most Part, by Copies of those Originals. The *Romans* had very few Plays that were worth one Farthing, but what they borrow'd from the *Grecians*, as you, and your Deputy Governor, borrow from the *French*. The *Romantick Lady*, in the *Tender Husband*, is taken from the *Precieuses Ridicules* of *Moliere*. But there is this Difference between *Moliere's* Comedy and yours:

Moliere's Comedy was very seasonable; And for that very Reason, among others, was very en-

tertaining and instructive. It appear'd at a Time, when the Family of the *Precieuses* was as numerous at *Paris*, as that of the *Coquettes* is at present in this wicked Town. But that Large and Fantastick Family disappear'd at once upon the Acting of that Comedy, like Nocturnal Vapours upon the rising of the Sun. But the Romantick Lady, in the *Tender Husband*, is so singular a Monster, that she can neither be instructive nor delightful. For if a Comick Poet does not Paint the Times in which he lives, he does nothing at all. But the Reading Romances, and Books of Knight Errantry, had long been out of Fashion, before the *Tender Husband* appear'd.

The Lying Lovers is made up of Two Plays of *Corneille*, *The Lyar*, and *The Sequel of the Lyar*. I shall say no more of it, than that it is a very wretched Copy of a very indifferent Original. For Comedy was not the Talent of *Corneille*. Your Champion, and your Deputy Governor, has made as bold with the *French*, as you, and to as good a Purpose; he has bravely turn'd the *Tartuffe* of *Moliere* out of Ridicule. But then to commute for that Offence, he has with equal Bravery Burlesqu'd the *Cid* of *Corneille*. We may guess, as I said before, at your future Conduct by your past. You, and your Deputy Governor, will go on to borrow from the *French*, and continue to rail at them. 'Tis not enough for some People to Rob, unless they likewise Murder. But how generous was the Conduct of the old *Romans*, when compar'd with yours? They borrow'd from the *Grecians*, as you do from the *French*, and came short of the *Grecians* in what they Borrow'd, as you Two do of the *French*. But then they frankly own'd the Obligations they had to them, and own'd them their Superiors. If *Horace* imitated *Pindar*, as he did very much, He had the Modesty and the Prudence to affirm, that *Pindar* is Inimitable.

But

But the Mention of the *Grecian* and *Roman* Stage, recalls to my Remembrance, that neither the *Athenians*, nor the *Romans*, would by any Means suffer their Actors to have the Management of their Stage ; nor would it ever be suffer'd in *France*, if the Actors were not all Excommunicated ; who being consequently look'd upon as a living Portion of the Damn'd, and the Devil's advanc'd Guard, no Man of Condition dares appear at the Head of them.

That Players should have the Management of the Stage, you see was contrary to the Sense of the Ancient *Grecians* and *Romans* ; and is suffer'd by the *French*, only on the Account of their being under Excommunication. How it was managed among us, before the Reign of King *Charles II.* I will not pretend to tell exactly : But I have strong Reasons to believe, that it was always under the Inspection and Regulation of the Court. For Forty Years after the Restoration, it was always under the Regulation of my Lord Chamberlain. And during those Forty Years, it flourish'd exceedingly ; and was illustrious for Great Wits, and famous for Great Actors. The great Writers have disappear'd, and the few good Actors who remain, are like to have no Successors. The Muses have abandon'd it with Disdain, as scorning to be controll'd by Wretches, who neither know nor value their Merit ; and who, like the Dunghil-Cock in *Aesop*, when they find a Jewel, reject it for a Barley-Corn : Yet you, forsooth, pretend to make it outvy all that ever appear'd at *Athens*, by running counter to those very Methods which rais'd the *Athenian* Stage so high. But to make the Extravagance and the Ridicule of this appear more strongly, I will endeavour to shew you, what the Virtues and the Capacities of your Deputies are, who are to bring about this great Event : I will send you their several Pictures very graphically drawn ; and you are too

too gallant a Person, Sir *John*, to take it ill, if by the Light of their Pictures, I set your own before your Eyes.

I will begin with your Deputy Governor, who being living, yet speaketh not. I will shew you, what his Religion, his Zeal, his Piety are; what his Moral and Social Virtues, his natural Affection, his Concern for his Wife and Children, and his Regard for the rest of Men. I shall dwell longer upon his Intellectual Qualities; because his is all the Power of the Stage, to whom his Brother Ministers are but Cyphers, and you a mere Nominal Sovereign, an errant Duke of *Venice*. I shall give you a Taste of his great Learning, and of his Knowledge of the Art of the Stage. I shall shew you how deeply he is read in History, which he talks of; and how conversant he is in that Dramatick Poet, whom he most pretends to admire. I shall then appeal to your own partial Judgment, whether this is not a proper Governor for the Stage, a Worthy Judge of the Works of Art, and highly qualified to approve or condemn the Plays which Authors bring you. I shall leave it to your own partial Judgment, whether a Theatre, with so sanctified and so understanding a Person at the Head of it, so illustrious for his Virtue and for his good Nature, is not certain to make that Theatre outvie all that ever appear'd at *Athens*; is not sure to give our Neighbours a Pattern of a Wise, a Learned, and a Virtuous Stage.

What *Buttler* tells us of the Religion of *Hudibras*, is justly applicable to the Deputy Governor:

For his Religion it is fit

To match his Learning and his Wit.

For having neither Wit by Nature, nor Learning by Education, he has Religion neither by Nature nor Education. But here, Sir *John*, I desire that

you

you would not mistake me. I do not pretend that a Player ought to eat the Saints: But then I wou'd not have him Impious, I wou'd not have him Blasphemous. The Deputy Governor has not so much as the first Principles of Natural Religion, without which there can be no Government, and no Society among Men. This irreproachable, inoffensive Person has a thousand times denied the very Being of a God: He has made his Brags and his Roasts of that senseless Infidelity: He has told all the World, that he retain'd it lately, when he believ'd he was in the Article of Death. O, the Manly, the Elegant, the Generous, the Ornamental Qualifications of a Miscreant, who is stupid enough to believe, that though there is Mind and Spirit in his wretched Carcass, there is none in the Heavens! For the Christian Religion, he does not modestly doubt of it, nor dispute candidly against it, but attacks it with the most impudent and outrageous Insolence. 'Tis credibly reported, that he spit on the Face of our Saviour's Picture at the *Bath*, with Words too execrable and too horrible to be repeated.

As Religion is the only solid Foundation of every Moral Duty, we ought not to be surpriz'd, if he who owns that he is wholly destitute of that, is void of all Moral and Social Virtues. He has neither Tenderness for his Wife, nor natural Affection for his Children, nor any sympathizing Regard for the rest of Men. He has, in the Compass of two Years, squander'd away Six Thousand Pounds at the *Groom Porter's*, without making the least Provision for either his Wife or his Children. He has not the least Regard for the rest of Men, and has had the Impudence to declare, that if he were on one Side of the Way, and some miserable Creature were on the other, rack'd with the most tormenting Pain, and roaring aloud for Succour; He would not cross the Chancel to give him Ease, nor
to

to save him from Death and Damnation. And yet this Caitiff pretends to be Loyal. As if it were possible for any one to *Honour the King*, who *neither fears God, nor regards Men*. Thro' what Motive can he be loyal? We can give some Account of our Loyalty; Because the King protects us by his Just, his Mild, and his Gracious Government; protects us in our Civil and Religious Rights; protects our Relations, our Friends and Companions, who are all of them dear to us, and whose Happiness is, by Reflection at least, our own. But C--- has neither God nor Religion, Relation, Friend, nor Companion, for whom he cares one Farthing. What Interest can he, who centers wholly in himself, have to be Loyal to a good and gracious King? He must be for Absolute Power in his Heart; and would do his Business best in an Arbitrary Reign. He must be qualify'd for consummate Villany; and would be a rare Tool for a Tyrant.

I should now proceed to give an Account of his Intellectual Qualifications: But I am oblig'd to postpone such an Account a little, in order to the acquainting you, that it has been for some Time Matter of Wonder to me, that this extraordinary Person, who *neither fears God, nor regards Men*, should fall down and idolize you; and that you, who for so many Years together have had nothing in your Mouth but Religion, Honour, Conscience, Justice, Benevolence, Innocence, should pretend to make one, who *neither fears God, nor regards Men*, pass upon the World for an inoffensive, irreproachable Person; nay, for one of manly, elegant, generous, ornamental Qualifications. What can be the Meaning of this, Sir John? Have you really a Mind to throw off the Mask at last; and to own to the World, that all those plausible Words Religion, Honour, Conscience, Justice, Benevolence, Innocence, with some *Nomenclators* mean

one and the same Thing ; and that is, private Interest? That they are with some Persons, nothing but a sort of a conjuring Cant ; a kind of a *Hocus Pocus* Language ; by virtue of which, he who uses them, does all his Tricks of *Legerdemain* without being discover'd, and calls the Money out from other People's Pockets into his own? Is this the Case, Sir *John*? Or are you pleas'd with your Deputy's offering Incense to you, after his spitting in the Face of our Saviour? Or are there some extraordinary Qualities, which being common to you both, cause this Union of Affections, and this Sympathy of Souls?

I believe I have hit the Mark. This last is certainly the Thing. There are several extraordinary Qualities which are common to both of you, which have caus'd this Union of Affections, and this Sympathy of Souls.

In the first Place, you have both of you risen from very inconsiderable Beginnings. You ; Sir *John*, if I have not been misinform'd, are descend'd from a Trooper's Horse ; and your Deputy Governor was begot by a Cane-Chair upon a Flower-Pot. There is no great Harm in all this : But then you have both of you shamelessly flown in the Faces of the very Persons who rais'd you.

In the Second place, You are both of you great Squanderers ; one of you an avaritious Squanderer, and the other both an avaritious and a vain-glorious one. His Purse and yours seems to be contriv'd, like a certain Knight's Fish-Fool ; the Purse let out Gold, as the Fish-Pool does Water, as fast as they take it in.

Your Deputy, in the Compass of two Years, has thrown away Six Thousand Pounds at the *Groom-Porter's*, without making the least Provision for his Family ; yet Hope still remains at the Bottom of

the Box for him; for which Reason, he is hopelessly undone.

You, Sir *John Edgar*, have been a Squanderer in Three Elements. Some of your Gold has been consum'd in *Rosicrusian Fire*. When you, and *Burnaby* the Poet, and *Tilly*, the late Warden of the *Fleet*, enter'd into an Indenture Tripartite, as *Face*, and *Subtle*, and *Doll Common* had done before you; but with this Difference, that these last were Cheats, whereas you and your Brethren were Gulls. With an Eagerness, like that of Sir *Epicure Mammon*, were you embark'd in the Search of your *Aurum potabile*; when you us'd to say to one another, over your Midnight Suppers, *Drink, and be Rich*.

Some of your Pelf has been wasted in the Smith's Forge; not out of any sordid Desire of Gain, but Zeal for the Service of the Ladies Petticoats.

More has been lost in the vast Depths of the Ocean, in Quest of Cod-Fish and old Ling.

What noble Designs, and what glorious Projects for the *Censor of Great Britain*, and for the Auditor General of the Universe? Still more of your Money has been scatter'd in Air; where for so many Years you have been building Castles, and will continue to build, to squander, and to consume, till the Earth gets the better of her Sister Elements, and you and your Projects disappear together.

There is a Third extraordinary Quality, Sir *John*, which is common to you and your Viceroy; which is, That you have both of you, for several Years together, been the celebrated Authors of other People's Works. Your Muses have a pretty near Resemblance with a certain Comedian's Wife, who passing with the Cully who married her for a Virgin, had several Children by other Persons, before her Husband lay with her. I make no doubt

but

but that your Muses are the more agreeable to both of you, because they are so very prolifick without any Trouble of yours. For you are sure of the Profit; and you have both of you enough of that Sort of Philosophy which is of the natural Growth of *Tipperary*, to despise the Infamy. Which puts me in mind of a notorious Tragedian, who being admonish'd by his Friends not to marry a certain Strumpet, of whose acquir'd Attractions he was grown very fond; because such a Marriage would bring Shame and Infamy upon him; swore by G---, that he lik'd her the better for it.

With how great Satisfaction, nay, with how great Joy, with how great Transport have I often reflected, that you and your Viceroy have infinitely surpass'd old *Villers Bays* of *Brentford*! That he has entirely submitted to his two younger Brothers; *Dicky Bays*, and *Colley Boys*, of the Hundred of old *Drury*! You are come to condemn his obsolete Rules, his *Regula Duplex*, his Rule of Transversing and Transposing: (Tho' I think, by the way, Sir *John*, you were formerly often in at the latter.) You are come to despise his Rule of Record, his Rule by way of Table-talk. You have shewn, that you look with Scorn on his Rule of Invention, and his *Drama Common-Place-Book*. He, poor Mortal, was contented to glean here and there a Sentence, sometimes from *Plutarch*, sometimes from *Seneca*, and sometimes from modern *Montaigne*. Whereas you have found a shorter way to *Parnassus*. You and your Viceroy bravely and boldly seize upon other Men's Plays; cause new Title-Pages to be printed; and so, to the Amazement of some few Readers, they pass with the rest for your own.

I was formerly so weak as to think, that nothing was more a Man's own than his Thoughts and Inventions. Nay, I have been often inclin'd to think, that a Man had absolute Property in his

Thoughts and Inventions alone. I have been apt to think, with a great Poet, that every Thing else which the World calls Property, is very improperly nam'd so :

—tanquam

*Sit proprium quidquam, puncto quod mobilis Hora,
Nunc prece, nunc pretio, nunc vi, nunc sorte su-
[prema,
Permutet Dominos, & cedat in altera Fura.*

The Money that is mine, was somebody's else before, and will be hereafter another's.

Houses and Lands too are certain to change their Landlords; sometimes by Gift, sometimes by Purchase, and sometimes by Might: but always, to be sure, by Death. But my Thoughts are unalterably and unalienably mine, and never can be another's. They are out of the Reach of Fortune, that disposes of all Things else. 'Tis not in the Power of Fate it self, to alienate, or transfer them; it can only make them pass for another's, or annihilate them, and cause them to be swallowed and lost in the Abyss of Time.

I have therefore formerly been inclin'd to think, That nothing ought to be so sacred as Man's Thoughts and Inventions: And I have more than once observ'd, That the impudent Plagiary, who makes it the Business of his Life to seize on them, and usurp them, has stuck at no other Property, but has dar'd to violate all that is Sacred among Men.

But here of late, the wonderful Operations of your self and your Viceroy, and your more wonderful Success upon them, have so confounded me, that I know not what to think.

As I have wonder'd at the noble Assurance with which you and your Deputy Governor have surpass'd your Elder Brother of Brentford in the Quick-

Quickness of becoming Author ; so, Sir *John*, if you will pardon a little Digression, I will felicitate you upon those dextrous Politicks, by which you have so much refin'd upon his ; and by which, when you bring any Thing upon the Stage, you secure Success to your Works. For old *Bays* was contented with the Printing a Hundred Sheets, in order to insinuate his Play into the Boxes : But you, Sir *John*, upon the like Occasion, have, by way of Lucubration and Speculation, printed a Hundred Thousand Sheets. He, poor Wretch, was satisfy'd with placing a Dozen or two of his Friends in the Pit, who were instructed to do their Duty : But you, Sir *John*, upon such an Occasion, have order'd a Thirty Pound Dinner to be got ready at the *Rose* ; where, like another *Arthur*, you and your Knights of the Round Table, have eat and drunk your selves up to Success ; and have become invincible. In short, you have almost fill'd the Pit and Galleries with your own Creatures ; who have been order'd, at some certain Signals, to clap, laugh, huzza, to clatter their Canes and their Heels to such a Degree, that the Hissing of a Hundred Snakes could no more be heard, than in the Uproar and Din of a Battel.

I begin to perceive, that, before I was aware, I have run into too great a Length for a Letter ; for which I heartily beg your Pardon. I shall finish your Viceroy's Picture in a Second Letter, which shall follow immediately upon the Heels of this ; and afterwards I shall proceed to the rest.

I am,

S I R,

Tours, &c.

L E T.

[illegible]

LETTER II.

*Ecce autem similia omnia, omnes congruunt unum
cognovis, omnes novis.*——

Hic in noxâ est, Ille ad defendendam causam adest;

Cum Ille est, Hic præsto est ; tradunt operas mutuas.

Terent.

S I R,

I Have now read over Five or Six of your Papers; but the more I read of them, the more demonstrative Proof I have, that the Advice which I gave you in my former Letter is found; and that is, Never to meddle with Criticism, nor the Improvement of the Dramatick Art. For tho' in the other Papers which make no mention of that Subject, there is not so much as the Shadow of that fine Raillery, and that agreeable Pleasantry, which are to be found in some of your Lucubrations, and in some few of your Speculations; and that for a very good Reason; Because Letters do not so easily arrive from the Dead, as they formerly did from *Ireland*: Yet is there something tolerable in them. Whereas the Three first, in which you pretend to criticize, and to talk in the old Cant of the Improvement of the Stage, are altogether absurd and extravagant. For which there is this very

good Reason to be given, that when you talk of Morality and Mankind, and the Knowledge of the World, you may, like your Elder Brother of *Brentford*, make use of other People's Wit and Judgment, that is, of your Common-Place-Book: But when you criticize, you must make use of your own.

In reading over your Second Paper, I know not whether I thought you or your Viceroy the more *wrong-headed* Person of the Two. For he has writ such a Letter in it, which none but he could write; and you have publish'd and commended such a Letter it, as none but you could publish and commend.

The Intention of your Paper, call'd *The Theatre*, is most apparently to support, in Defiance of the Court and Town, a Parcel of impudent Players, in Pride, Presumption, Folly, Ignorance, Insolence; and this the Viceroy calls a most dangerous Design. And immediately after, he thinks to make amends for his real Arrogance and his Insolence, by an hypocritical, canting Humility. He is pleas'd to say, That you cannot but be sensible, that the *English* Actors stand upon a more precarious Foot, than Persons of any other Profession whatsoever. But surely, Sir *John*, these Thoughts are very lately come into your Viceroy's Head. For if he has thought himself all along upon a more precarious Foot, than any Person of any Condition whatever; how comes it that he has all along shewn more Impudence, and more Insolence, than any Person of any other Profession whatever? He seems to envy the Happiness of the *French* Actors, because they are under absolute Protection, forsooth; not considering, that for that very Reason they are subject to absolute Chastisement.

If a *French* Actor had written such a flagrant Epistle in *France*, as a certain late *British* Actor did lately to a certain *British* Knight, what do you think,

think, Sir *John*, would have become of him? Would he have been quit for being silenced, after he had flown in the Face of all the Ministers, the Duke Regent, and the King himself? Or would he have been now Rowing in the Gallies, upon the Sustainance of Bread and Water, with a Head like that of an old Statue, without either Ears or Nose? But there is nothing in this Letter, which is so very extravagant, or which moves my Indignation so much, as this Wretches insinuating that that he's an accomplish'd Actor: Than which nothing can be more Impudent. For the Truth of the Matter is, that he acts nothing at all well: He sometimes appears pretty well upon the Stage, when he is the real Thing which the Poet designs as a ridiculous, incorrigible, impudent Fop in Comedy; and a bold, dissembling, dangerous, undermining Villain in Tragedy. And sometimes in Tragedy he blends the Fop and the Villain together, as in *Fago* for Example, in the *Moor of Venice*, and there you have the Vice-Roy entire.

And here, Sir *John*, this worthy Person is for referring it to the Publick, whether he is an accomplished Actor or no. Here again he is for expressing great Humility, and making a Shew of great Gratitude; 'tis forsooth the pure Will and Pleasure of the Publick, that must at last determine upon his Merit; 'tis thither only that he must fly for Grace or Favour, and from their Sentence there can be no Appeal. Why then, Sir *John*, he is utterly undone. For the Publick, you may depend upon it, does him the same Justice that I do. The Publick will neither be imposed upon by his counterfeit Humility, nor his insipid Cajolery. The Publick is not so very weak, but that they know that they are composed of particular Persons; and that he who has affronted so many of the best and the noblest of those particular Persons, can never have any real
 Regard

Regard for the rest. The Court is certainly the noblest Part of the Publick : Next to which, are the Persons of Quality, and Gentlemen of the Town.

Has he not behaved himself to both these with intolerable Insolence ? Has not the one silenced him, and the other compell'd him to make his Entrance and Exit upon the Stage, both in the same Moment, and in such a Manner as never Actor did before ?

Your Reflections, Sir John, upon the foresaid Letter, are, like all the rest, very surprizing. You say, That *tis plain by this Letter, the Theatre both wants an Advocate, and deserves one.* As by the Theatre you mean the Managers, I have shewn pretty well above, how far they deserve an Advocate. But for God's Sake, Sir John, how came they to want an Advocate ? They wanted none before you came among them ; that is, before this Winter. Last Season they were in high Favour, both with the Court and Town. Nay, for Seven Years together, they have, clear of all Charges, got every Year a Thousand Pounds a Man. From which 'tis clear, that they were under neither Want, nor Distress, till this Winter. How came they to want an Advocate now ? How came you to take no Notice of the Reason of this Distress ? Or are you for improving their Vices only ? There can but one Reason in Nature be given, why they should want an Advocate this Winter, any more than they did the last. And that is, because their Vices, which we have nam'd so often, their Impudence, their Pride, their Insolence, are grown to such a flaming Height, that the World can endure them no longer. But instead of Reproving and Reprimanding them for these Vices, you are pleas'd to insinuate, that they ought to be indulged in them, lest Correction and Chastisement should render them less capable of playing their

Parts well ; which is as much as to say, that if any of them should commit High-Treason, or a Murder, they ought not to be hanged for it, for fear it should spoil their Acting. But there is a great deal of just such Logick as this, every where in these blessed Papers.

The Paragraph that begins at the bottom of the Third Column, in this Second Paper, is an unparallel'd one, and shews what vast Improvement of the Stage we are to expect from you, and how perfectly you understand it. You say that in *France*, they are delighted either with Low and Fantastical Farces, or Tedious and Declamatory Tragedies. How rarely this sounds from one now, who has himself brought their Plays upon the *English* Stage, and set his own Name to them ; from one, of whose Poetical Works they make up the better Half ; and lastly, from one who in his Speculations has so often, and so fulsomly commended the bare Translations of those Originals which he here decries ? 'Tis true, one of their own celebrated Authors has accus'd *Corneille* of being sometimes a little Declamatory, but neither he, nor any one before your self, has ever accus'd *Racine* of it. How angry were you once with the Town, for not liking that wretched Rhapsody, the *Phedra* of Captain *Rag*, which is nothing but a Medley of Two Tragedies of *Racine*, *The Phedron*, and *The Bajazet*, both murder'd in the mingling them. And now *Racine* himself, it seems, is grown Contemptible to one, who formerly so much admir'd an absurd Imitation of him. I am very willing to allow, that we have had Tragick Poets in *England*, who have had more Genius than the *French*. But 'tis not enough to have Genius, a Man must have Art too, which few of our Tragick Poets have had. This is the Judgment of no less a Master than *Horace*.

— *Ego nec Studiam sine Divite verâ,
Nec rade quid proſit video Ingenium, alterius ſic,
Altera poſcit opem res & conjurat amice.*

Horat. Art. Poet.

The Author, who would write an accompliſh'd Tragedy, muſt know what a Whole and its Parts are. It without them he has the fineſt Things in the World in his Tragedy, he will come under the Cenſure of *Horace*.

*Infelix operis ſumma, quia ponere totum
Nefciat.* —

Horat. Art. Poet.

I fancy Sir *John*, that you are an utter Stranger to the Works of that great Poet, or ſure you could never affirm in Contempt of his Authority, what you aſſert at the end of this Paragraph, that a Dramatick Work can never be Gracefully executed under the Reſtraint of Rule; and particularly of the Three Unities; that the *French* fall into the Abſurdity of thinking it more maſterly to do little or nothing in a ſhort Time, than to invade the Rules of Time and Place, to adorn their Plays with Greatneſs and Variety. Surely, Sir *John*, you wrote this after the Third Bottle. What, do you pretend to improve an Art, by crying down the Rules of it? Do you pretend to improve it by Chance, for it muſt be done by Rule or Chance; there is certainly no Third Way. You ſay that a Dramatick Work cannot be gracefully executed under the Reſtraint of Rules. The very Reverse of Truth. And therefore a Noble Poet, and Critick, who has Ten Thouſand Times your Judgment, has ſaid the very Reverse of what you affirm: That a Dramatick Deſign cannot be gratefully executed without the Rules, and particularly without the Unities. The Paſſage in

the *Essay on Poetry*, which has always pass'd with the best Judges, for the Standard of true Judgment; and with the Commendation of which, my Lord *Roscommon*, who was himself so great a Judge, has begun his *Essay on Translated Verse*.

The Passage in the *Essay on Poetry*, which is the Contradiction of yours, is as follows.

*The Unities of Action, Time, and Place,
Which, if observ'd, give Plays so great a Grace;
Are, though but little practis'd, too well known
To be taught here, where we pretend alone
From nicer Faults to purge the present Age;
Less obvious Errors of the English Stage.*

Now here the noble Author asserts Two Things; First, that the observing the Unities of Action, Time, and Place, give a great deal of Grace to Plays: Secondly, that the not observing these Unities, is destructive of Grace in Plays; for by neglecting them, he affirms, that an Author commits obvious and palpable Errors; and certainly Errors, and the Graces in Writing; are two very different Things.

Thus, you see, Sir *John*, that you are condemn'd by this Noble Writer, who for forty Years together, has justly pass'd with People of all Parties, Ranks and Degrees of Men, for the greatest and surest Judge of these Matters in *England*. And you see that he does not only condemn your Sentiment, but that his Sentence reaches your very Terms. I had shewn you before, that Reason is against you. For to talk of improving an Art, by declaring against the Rules of it, must be a Jest to every Painters and Fiddlers Prentice, in Town. Now let us see, whether Experience, and the Practice of the Stage, declare for you. I am afraid we shall find, upon a strict Scrutiny, that the very best of our Plays are the most Regular.

regular. *Heroick Love*, and the *Orphan*, are certainly Two of the best of our Tragedies; and they are as certainly Two of the most regular. The *Fox*, the *Alchymist*, the *Silent Woman* of *Ben Jonson*, are incomparably the best of our Comedies; and they are certainly the most regular of them all. If you will not take my word for this; let us see what *Ben* says himself to the Matter, in his Prologue to the *Fox*.

*Nor made he his Play from Fests stoln from each Tale
But makes Fests to fit his Fable; [ble,
And so presents quick Comedy refin'd,
As best Criticks have design'd.
The Laws of Time, Place, Persons he observeth;
From no needful Rule he swerveth.*

Now, do not you see by this last Line, that it was the Opinion of the greatest of all our Comick Poets, That the Rules were absolutely necessary to Perfection?

To return to the *French*. Because you have been told, that the *French* Genius has neither the Force nor Sublimity of the *English*; therefore you conclude, that the Rules are in fault. Whereas I have clearly shewn you, that nothing perfectly beautiful can be produc'd in the *Drama*, without the Help of the Rules. You ought therefore to have ask'd your self this Question; Whether the *French* Dramatick Poets would not have writ worse, if they had not been sustain'd by them? Whether the Rules are not Props and Supports to the Weakness of the *French* Genius? Whether their Dramatick Poets, who wrote before the Rules were introduc'd among them, are comparable to those who have writ since? Whether *Garnier*, *Tristan*, *Rotrou*, were equal to *Corneille* and *Racine*? All the World knows that they are not.

You

You should likewise have consider'd, whether *Corneille*, who introduc'd the Rules among them, was acquainted with them when he first began to write? So far from it, that he himself owns, that he did not so much as know that there were Rules. You should then have ask'd this Question; Whether the Dramatick Poems which he wrote before he was acquainted with *Aristotle*, are comparable to those which he wrote, after he came to be convinc'd of the Necessity and Efficacy of his Rules? Any one who has read his Works, could have told you, that there is no manner of Comparison between them. It had then been Time to consider, whether the Genius of *Shakespear* himself would not have appear'd brighter and more glorious, if he had writ regularly.

This, Sir *John Edgar*, may be depended upon; That if you know any one who calls himself a Poet, and who is offended at Rules, that is, at Criticism; know, that that Aversion is a never-failing Mark of a very vile Scribbler. Know, that there never was in the World, or ever will be, a Legitimate Epick, or Dramatick Poet, but he was fond of Criticism, and of Rules; nay, he was himself a Critick, a just, a great, a severe Critick, and a Religious Observer of Rules.

The Rules of Poetry constitute the Art of it; which he who does not thoroughly understand, can never be a great Poet. For how should any one perfectly practise an Art, which he does not perfectly understand? Can any one believe, that *Homer*, *Sophocles* and *Euripides*, did not write regularly, and were not great Criticks; when one of the most penetrating of all the old Philosophers has taken the very Rules of the Art from his Observations of the Method which they took to succeed? The extravagant and absurd Aversion which we have shewn so long to Criticks, and to Rules, is one Cause at least that the very Species of
Poets

Poets is shortly like to be ektinguish'd in *Great Britain*.

'Tis now about a Century and a Half since the first Theatre was erected among us. Why have we since that Time improv'd in almost every Art, except Dramatick Poetry? Our Architecture is become quite another Thing. We are come to contemn our old *Gothick* and barbarous manner of Building; and are perfectly convinc'd, that the ancient *Gracian* and *Roman* manner is not only more beautiful and more harmonious, but more useful and more convenient. We have since that Time made a very great Progress in Musick. Our National Painting is likewise vastly improv'd: So are likewise the Mechanick Arts. We have excell'd the very Nations, from which we have taken them. And tho' we are esteem'd by our Neighbours to be but very indifferent Inventors, we are very justly thought by them to be the greatest Improvers of the World.

For what Reason, then, have we made no Progress in our Dramatick Poetry? Why has the first who appear'd among us, ev'n in the Infancy of our Stage, surpass'd all his Successors in Tragedy, by the Confession of those very Successors? Why has *Ben Johnson* excell'd all in Comedy, who have attempted it after him? What Cause can be assign'd for this? but that our Architects, Painters, and Masters of Musick, have been humble and docile enough, to study and follow the Rules of their Art, and to be corrected both by foreign Examples, and by domestick Remonstrances? Whereas the Persons whom we have call'd Poets, being very proud, and very ignorant, have reject'd all these with Disdain. Which puts me in mind of the following Lines of my Lord *Roscommon*, in his Translation of *Horace's Art of Poetry*.

Why

*Why is he honour'd with a Poet's Name,
 Who neither knows, nor would observe a Rule;
 And chuses to be ignorant and proud,
 Rather than own his Ignorance, and learn?*

Which Lines, if they do not shew *Horace's* Sense exactly, yet shew my Lord *Roscommon's*; which is of no small weight.

Yet, after all, Sir *John*, to shew you that I am neither a Bigot, nor a Slave to the Rules, my Opinion is, That whereas the Rules are only Directions to an Epick or Dramatick Poet, for the Attainment of Sovereign Beauty; whenever it may happen, by very great Chance, that Sovereign Beauty can be better attain'd by suspending one of them for that Time, than by a too rigid Observance of it; then, by consequence, the grand Rule is, resolutely to suspend it. And such a masterly Neglect of it for the Time, shews a Poet to be both discreet and bold!

For as 'tis the Prerogative of a King, to suspend the Execution of a Law, when such a Suspension is, and appears to be absolutely necessary for the Safety and Welfare of the Publick; which is the great Law, to which all other Laws ought to be subservient; and consequently, for the procuring or promoting of which, there is not one of them but what ought to be broken, as upon all other Occasions they ought to be kept inviolably: So 'tis a Prerogative of a Poet, to set aside a Rule of his Art, or a Rule of an Art subservient to his own, whenever 'tis necessary for the Ennobling of his Art, and the Enriching the Commonwealth of Learning.

However, this is a Law of eternal Obligation, That whereever great Beauties can be shewn with the Rules, as well as they can without them, there the Rules ought always to remain most sacred and inviola-

inviolable. The Reason is plain : Because when the Surprize and the Emotion is over, which is caus'd by the Power of great Beauty ; the Reader, who comes to be cool and calm, is apt to look for Defects ; and if he finds them, tho' not in the Part where the Beauties lie, yet in the whole, he is apt to be shock'd.

In my humble Opinion, this ought to be the certain Signal for breaking thro' a Rule, in order to shew great Beauties ; when the Beauties, which by that masterly and noble Neglect, adorn a particular Part, are powerful enough to make more than Compensation for the Defect, which by the Irregularity accrues to the whole. But since, as we observ'd before, the Beauties will be still more powerful, if the Rules are preserv'd ; a Poet ought to make his utmost Effort, in order to gain that Point. And if that Point can be gain'd by making those Efforts, the Poet who fails to use them, either thro' Sloth, or any other Cause whatever, becomes altogether inexcusable.

And now, Sir *John*, I appeal to any impartial Man, if it is not apparent, from what you and I have said of the Rules, That you and your Deputies are fit to be the Managers of no Stage, unless it be that of a Mountebank ; into which you are turning that of *Drury-Lane*, as fast as possibly you can. For there are Mountebanks in every Profession ; and the sure Mark of a Mountebank in any Profession, is declaring against the Rules of his Profession ; the bestowing pompous Titles upon himself, and high *Encomiums* upon himself and his *Nostrums*.

I have known a grave Divine turn Mountebank ; and travelling *North-West*, set up his Stage at every Market-Town ; where he has vend'd his Hete-

odox Opinions, as a Physical Empirick does his sophisticated Medicines.

I have likewise been acquainted with a Politick Mountebank, who contradicting the fundamental Maxim of the Politicks, has affirm'd, That Dominion, especially if it be an *Aristocracy*, is founded, not on the Strength of Men's Possessions, but on the Weakness of their Minds.

I have likewise known a Salt-Water Mountebank, who has pretended to find out a way to sail, like the Witch in *Macbeth*, to *Aleppo* in a Sieve, and catch Fish enough in his Voyage to ruin all the Fishmongers.

I know a certain vile Scribbler for the House in *Drury-Lane*, who is an errant Mountebank; not only for Railing at the Rules, but for Metamorphosing Tragedy into Comedy, and Comedy into Tragedy. He has writ two Tragedies, the Language of which is peculiarly adapted to excite Laughter: And the Comedies, which are his own, perform the Effects of Tragedy: He never offers at a Jest, but the very offer at it moves a Terror; and 'tis no sooner out, but it moves Compassion.

I had gone thus far, and had a very great Length to come; for of the Six Papers that are now extant, I have hardly gone thro' two; when, by a most surprizing Piece of News, I was forc'd to break off in this Place abruptly. For News is come to me this very Moment, that Sir *John Edgar* is certainly defunct; and that the Patent is struck speechless by a syderal Blast. So that I am at a Loss what to do. To proceed, would look like Insulting:

ing: And how to make an end, I know not. I must desire some Person, into whose Hands this Letter may come, to do it for me; who may know, perhaps, much better than I do, what Ceremonies are stated, and what Compliments are usual, between a Mortal and a Ghost.

Jan. the 23d.

17 ^{$\frac{1}{2}$} .

F I N I S.



And how to make an end, I know not. I
 will leave some thing, into whose hands this
 will may come, so as it for me, who may
 say, perhaps, much better than I, what to
 do with me, and what Complements are
 due between a Man and a Ghost.

On the 21st
 1718

F I N I S

